

# ***Professional Learning Communities: APHS***

## ***Facilitation Guide Days 1-6***

## ***Day 1: Creating an Effective PLC***

1. Describe what effective PLCs look like.

Discuss the *Components of a PLC*, found on page 5 in the handbook (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Several copies have been made to share with pairs/triads small groups.

### **Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision**

- Guide teacher behavior
- Identify common purpose
- Determine role in accomplishing the purpose
- Vision: what is important to the school?

### **Shared Leadership**

- Nurtured by principal
- Continuous adult learning
- Strong collaboration
- Democratic participation

### **Collective Learning**

- Study collegially
- Work collaboratively
- Apply what you have learned

### **Supportive Conditions**

- Logistical conditions: when, where, what, and how the faculty regularly and frequently meet.
- Human capacities: respect and trust

### **Shared Personal Practice**

- Regular and frequent review of teacher practice and instructional behaviors
- Visit, observe, and give feedback
- Embrace the coaching model

Ask: What do we want our PLC to look like?

Collectively write a statement for each of the 5 components (see worksheet).

Figure 1.1 Components of Professional Learning Communities

<p><b>Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision</b></p> <p>The staff consistently focuses on students' learning, which is strengthened by the staff's own continuous learning—hence, professional learning community.</p>	<p><b>Shared and Supportive Leadership</b></p> <p>Administrators and faculty hold shared power and authority for making decisions.</p>	<p><b>Collective Learning and Its Application</b></p> <p>What the community determines to learn and how they will learn it in order to address students' learning needs is the bottom line.</p>	<p><b>Supportive Conditions</b></p> <p><i>Structural</i> factors provide the physical requirements: time, place to meet for community work, resources and policies, etc. to support collaboration. <i>Relational</i> factors support the community's human and interpersonal development, openness, truth telling, and focusing on attitudes of respect and caring among the members.</p>	<p><b>Shared Personal Practice</b></p> <p>Community members give and receive feedback that supports their individual improvement and that of the organization.</p>
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Figure 1: Hord & Sommers, 2009, p. 9

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Learning Community

<b>Shared Beliefs, Values, and Vision</b>	Our PLC will
<b>Shared and Supportive Leadership</b>	Our PLC will
<b>Collective Learning and Its Application</b>	Our PLC will
<b>Supportive Conditions</b>	Our PLC will
<b>Shared Personal Practice</b>	Our PLC will

Complete in the first PLC meeting and put in the PLC Handbook binder under “Minutes”

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## ***Day 2: Creating Vision and Mission Statements***

**"Be the change you want to see in the world." Gandhi**

1. Describe vision: What is our PLC trying to do?
  - ☐ A PLC vision should be a descriptive statement of what the teacher practices will be like at any given time in the future. Revisit the *PLC Component* statements from Day 1 meeting. Use these statements to help you write vision statements.
  - ☐ Vision Statement Activity – Four square a piece of paper and label each square with: Student Learning, Empowerment, Teacher Learning, and Collaboration. In a pair/triad write descriptive statements of how you and your PLC will: focus on student learning, empower yourself and other teachers, continuously learn, and increase collaboration. Share the small group cards/paper to the whole group to create a composite representing group consensus of the small group ideas. Chart the group's vision on the Vision and Mission document: Use descriptive words/phrases of what one would expect to see, hear, and experience in the PLC.

Example: At P.S.180 (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009) the vision is stated as: We are a community of learners that is united in the belief that excellent in education is the only choice. We are dedicated to fostering literacy and developing English language arts and mathematical skills to become independent life-long learners and problem solvers (p. 39).

2. Describe the mission: How will our PLC achieve its vision?
  - ☐ The mission answers: What is our purpose? What do we care most about? What will we accomplish?
  - ☐ Discuss in whole group the mission questions and create a descriptive, brief, and succinct statement that explains your PLC mission. Chart the group's mission on the Vision and Mission document.
  - ☐ Take the completed document to the poster printer. Make a poster and display it in the PLC meeting room.
  - ☐ File the Vision and Mission document in the PLC handbook under "Minutes."

Example: At Hugo Newman College Preparatory School (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009) the mission is stated as a theme: Where Excellence in Education is Our Choice. The school's faculty and staff carry out this mission when they engage in sharing success stories and engage in collaborative planning that ensures all students have the opportunity to learn (p. 38).

3. Create bumper sticker statements that embody your PLC vision and mission. Post them in the faculty lunch room.

Student Learning	Empowerment
Teacher Learning	Collaboration

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Learning Community

Vision

Mission

### ***Day 3: Developing Group Norms***

1. Complete the *Developing Norms* activity located in the PLC handbook, page 13 (SERVE, 2004).
2. When group norms have been adopted, transfer them to the *Group Norms* document. There are two to choose from.
3. Make a poster of the document and display it in the PLC meeting room.
4. File the document in the PLC Handbook under “Minutes.”

Note: If your group wants to create a different document than the one provided, go for it!

An effective group process takes time to develop, just like good wine or an aged cheese. Allow enough time in your PLC to encourage creative thinking. If you think that members of your PLC need to get to know one another try an icebreaker activity.

If at any time your group gets stuck in the “storming” phase, where meetings are marked by turmoil; members complain or argue, enlist the help of your coaching staff or your administrator. You can also use restorative practices with colleagues!



# Ice Breakers and Warm-Ups

Shared at the June 2000 NSRF National Facilitators Meeting

<http://www.nsrharmony.org/protocol/doc/icebreakers.pdf>

The following exercises designed to help people get to know one another.

1. If you were to write your **Autobiography**, what would the title be and why.
2. Write on the inside of your tent card (table name card) **a fact about yourself** that no one would be likely to guess. Read them out loud. Gives people a hook. (i.e., "Faith, who raises sheep.")
3. **Draw a picture that describes who you are** -- can be symbols, colors, you doing something...
- 4 **Create a flower**. Each person puts one petal on the flower, on which is written something important about them. If we can find something we all have in common we put it in the center.
5. People post one **clue about themselves** (with no name) on a bulletin board. Later in the day, add another clue beside the first clue (more if there is time) and people guess identities from the clues at the end of the day. People make assumptions and then they find that it's very revealing and fun.
6. **Post cards from the edge**. Bring a collection of wild postcards and hand them out. Each person finds something in the post card that relates to their experience as a teacher or principal and shares that with the group.
7. **Give out pennies and look at the dates**. Go around the room and share something that occurred for you in the year of the penny. It can be something about your education (as a child, a teachers etc.) or it can be just about life. You'll need a good collection of pennies with varied dates.
8. **Gingerbread people**. Hand out Gingerbread people, who have a question on each of their body parts: what gives you indigestion (stomach), what drives you crazy (head), what you love (heart), what you bring (one leg), what you want to let go of, (hand) what you want to take away. Each person takes a turn introducing themselves and answering the questions. They can write them in and post them all, with their names on the Gingerbread people.
9. **Draw your school** - either a picture or a floor plan, show challenges, strengths - personalize school by what you think makes it special. Share pictures.
10. Write down **powerful learning experiences** from when you were age 10 to 13. Share them.
11. **Movie titles that describe your school experience** and why.
12. **Two truths and a lie**: you share two things that are true and one lie about yourself (as an educator or a person - decide on one) and the group tries to guess which one is the lie. "What you would like to be true?" is the follow up question.

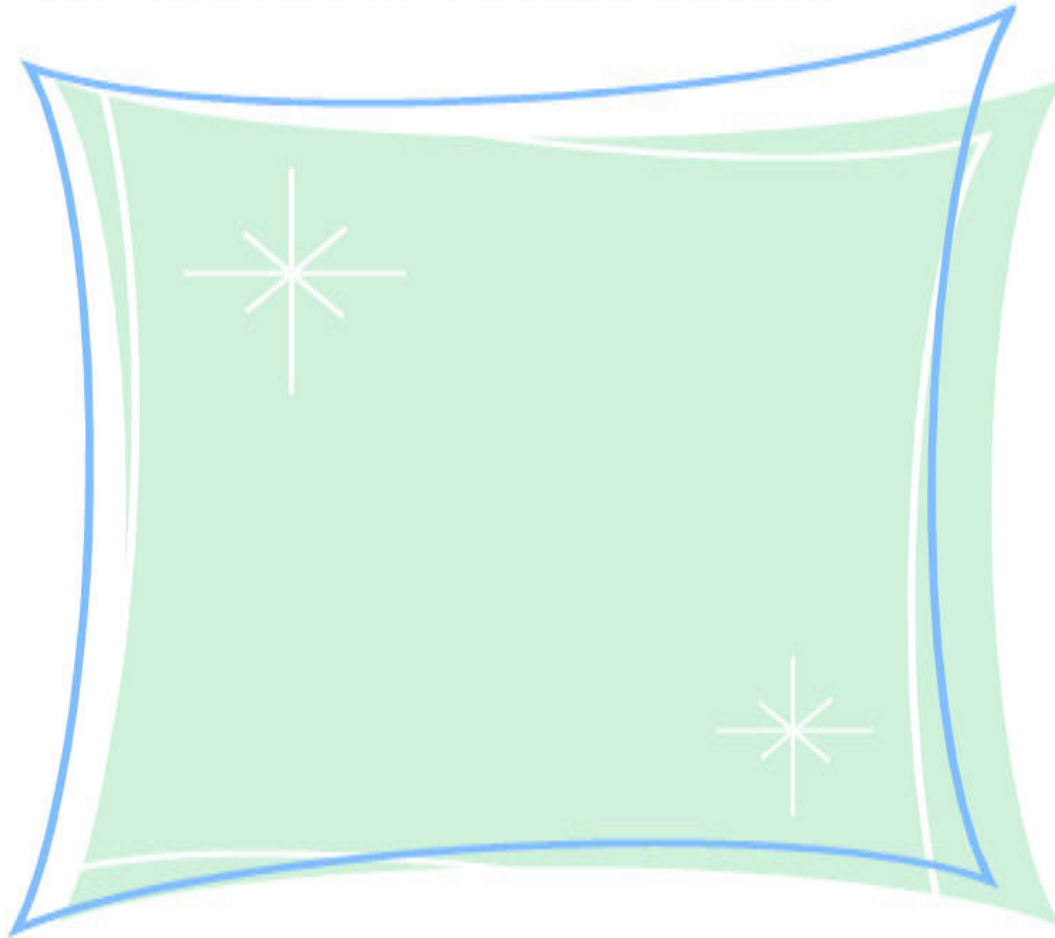
Day \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Learning Community

## **Traits of Successful Team Members**

Successful team members exhibit

1. Commitment to the team and its goals
2. Mutual respect and understanding
3. Willingness to help, support, and trust one another
4. Collegial participation that creates a comfortable atmosphere for sharing both successes and failures.
5. Tolerance for discussion, debate, and disagreement
6. Willingness to question, get outside current mindsets, and be open to new ideas and solutions.

Other traits we need in order to be successful team members



Source: SERVE, 2004

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Day \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Learning Community

Dimensions of our Professional Learning Community	
<p>Characteristics i.e. reflective dialogue, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, shared values and norms</p>	
<p>Structural Conditions i.e. time and place to meet and discuss, interdependent teaching roles, teacher empowerment, communication structures</p>	
<p>Human/Social Resources i.e. openness to improvement, trust and respect, supportive, collegial, and collaborative</p>	

File the document in the PLC Handbook under “Minutes.”

Source: Roberts & Pruitt, 2009

### ***Day 4: Scheduling Facilitators and Recordkeepers; Creating the Agenda***

1. Review the roles in the PLC handbooks, pages 14-16.
2. Collaboratively schedule a facilitator and recordkeeper. Document who is accountable for these roles in the *Professional Learning Communities Charter* document, located in the PLC handbook, pages 17-18.
3. Review the agenda created, located in the PLC handbook, pages 18-20. Decide if this is a workable agenda for your PLC: does it meet the vision and mission? Keep in mind that the district vision is to incorporate Marzano strategies into teaching practice and the school vision is to incorporate resiliency strategies into school culture and climate.
4. Identify if there are areas of teaching practice, knowledge, skills, etc. that your PLC may want a guest speaker and/or additional training. Schedule time with the instructional/content coaches for professional development.
5. Complete the *Charter* pages and file them in the PLC Handbook in “Minutes.”

## ***Day 5: Creating the PLC Action Plan for the Month of September/October, 2009***

### **Where are we? Where should we be? Who is monitoring our work?**

1. Review and discuss all the work that the PLC has accomplished in the past four days.

Talk about the reality that a full adoption and implementation of a PLC does not happen overnight, in one week, a month, or maybe even a year. Celebrate that you have begun the journey together. Introducing a PLC into a school means introducing innovation, for many schools and teachers have not experienced this way of working and learning together. Eventually, this way of working together becomes part of the school culture.

2. CELEBRATE!! Use *This Week's Best Ideas* worksheet to share (located in the PLC handbook under "materials").

3. Review the PLC vision and mission and create 1 or 2 goals for the rest of September/October.

- Also refer to the information about action research located on the Participant Role sheet, in the PLC handbook, page 16 and below.
- Document these goals on either the *Smart Goals* or the *PLC at Work Action Plan* documents located in the "materials" section of the PLC handbook.
- File your documents in the PLC Handbook under "Minutes."
- Begin to take Meeting Notes (see PLC handbook, page 21) and file in the PLC Handbook under "Minutes."
- Begin to end each meeting with a *Reflection Activity* (see PLC handbook, page 22)

### **What is "action research"? (SERVE, 2009)**

Action research—often called "teacher research"—is a process of self-directed problem identification and the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to improve classroom practice. The teacher-researcher's task is to discover—through information collected and studied in the classroom—what works, with whom, and under what circumstances. The overall process involves elements of both quantitative and qualitative research, oriented toward the goal of solving real educational problems or addressing actual student-learning needs in the immediate context. By nature, action research produces teachers who become sophisticated seekers and users of knowledge for practical application and enhanced instructional practice and student-learning outcomes.

### ***What kinds of problems and issues does action research address?***

Because action research takes place in the "real world" of the classroom and the school, the range of problems and issues addressed becomes, essentially, limitless. Part of the power and efficacy of the process is that it is grounded in an initial comprehensive analysis and understanding by teachers of what is working—and what isn't (the "what

keeps you up at night" factor!)—in their specific classrooms with their specific students. Thus, whatever might be hindering improved learning outcomes of any student or group of students becomes the core around which all research and ultimate change are directed.

**"You cannot solve problems with the same level of thinking that got you into them." Einstein**

### **Talk About Teaching**

4. The expectation is that each teacher will work on the goals set by the PLC in his or her classroom. In subsequent PLC meetings, discussions take place as to how goals are being met, challenges or barriers faced, etc. We will learn through the experiences of others. Charlotte Danielson believes that "conversation contributes to thinking" (p. 5).

Some things to discuss could include: examination of practice, possible barriers to success, sharing of what works, problem solve for collective solutions, examination of student work, engaging students in learning, and data analysis.

From the University of South Carolina at Greensboro this list may help you focus your collegial conversations:

- Focus collectively on teacher learning that leads to greater student learning
- Explore ways of increasing teacher knowledge and instructional expertise in a specific area
- Use new knowledge and expertise to design and develop materials, tools, and approaches for use with students
- Provide feedback and recommendations about materials, tools, and approaches
- Share information about learning team activities and results with the faculty, administration, and other interested groups

5. Involve yourself with the coaching model: at APHS we have coaches for instructional strategies, math, literacy, and technology. Coaches are located in room 306 and can be reached at either x6327 or x6306.

Coaching is a collaborative process of developing a person's strengths (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Coaching increases conversations around teaching and learning and focuses on how teachers can improve student outcomes.

APHS coaches have created a blog where strategies and sources can be found.

<http://aphs0910.edublogs.org/>

6. Use the PLC wikispace to talk with other PLC groups, share ideas and data.

<http://aphs0910.wikispaces.com/>

**Repeat every month.**

## ***Day 6: Creating a Personal Professional Growth Plan***

Ongoing learning is a sign of commitment to the teaching profession. Commit yourself to learning.

1. Refer to the information about professional growth plans (optional but recommended) located on the Participant Role sheet, in the PLC handbook, page 16.
2. Complete your *Professional Growth Plan* (located in the PLC handbook, page 23).
  - a. Ideas for professional growth could focus around student achievement data: collect and analyze data, think about the reasons for poor performance and what you can do for improvement, create a professional growth plan for yourself by developing specific activities to meet the set goal.
  - b. Schedule a time to meet with the principal to discuss your plans.
  - c. Monitor your plans.
  - d. Use this document to supplement and support your teacher evaluation.

From here your PLC should be able to function a bit more independently. Coaches and administrators are happy to visit at any time for continued support and encouragement.

Remember, the major focus of your PLC is about learning, both for the teachers and students. Putting into practice what you are talking about in your PLC is the key to sustaining a successful and effective professional learning community.

All teachers in a PLC should (Hord & Sommers, 2008):

- Meet regularly with colleagues during the school day to plan and talk about instruction.
- Align collaborative work with school improvement goals.
- Participate fully in the learning community.

## Other Sources

Tools for Schools <http://www.nsd.org/news/tools/index.cfm>

The latest information from the field in easy-to-read articles and resources that are helpful in your work. Articles on school improvement, organizational planning, training, and managing change — are summarized from significant journals. The field's most useful publication for any educator whose primary responsibility is to ensure classroom success.

Looking at Student Work <http://www.lasw.org>

This web site represents an association of individuals and educational organizations that focus on looking at student work to strengthen connections between instruction, curriculum, and other aspects of school life to students' learning.

Examples of E-portfolios <http://eportfolio.lagcc.cuny.edu/>

An electronic tool used to showcase work

Other E-portfolio information <http://electronicportfolios.org/teachers/index.html>

How Critical Friends Group protocols help teachers improve instruction and student learning [http://www.nsrharmony.org/gene/Bambino\\_2002.pdf](http://www.nsrharmony.org/gene/Bambino_2002.pdf)

Evaluating Professional Growth Plans

<http://www.ncel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/profdevl/pd500.htm>

Example of Professional Growth Plan

<http://www.hrs.ecsd.net/perfmgmteval/pdf/teachprofgrowth.pdf>



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